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International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Khalid Mohammed Osman **Ali** (Sudan)

I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2009, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-fourth session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 12th, 13th, 14th, 20th and 25th meetings, on 20, 21, 22 and 30 October and 19 November 2009 (see A/C.4/64/SR.12-14, 20 and 25).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.[1]

4. At its 1st meeting, on 1 October, the Committee decided to establish a Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, to be chaired by the delegation of Colombia, to prepare proposals to be submitted under the item.

5. At the 12th meeting, on 20 October, two panellists, representing the Oceans and Human Health Initiative of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America and the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat made presentations on the theme "Space for global health — space technology and pandemics" (see A/C.4/64/SR.12).

6. Also at the 12th meeting, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of that Committee (see A/C.4/64/SR.12).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20).

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II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.4/64/L. 2/Rev.1 and A/C.4/64/L.4

7. At its 12th meeting, on 20 October, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/64/L.2), submitted by Colombia in its capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, as well as a draft resolution bearing the same title submitted by Chile and Mexico (A/C.4/64/L.4).

8. At the same meeting, the representative of Chile announced that draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.4 had been withdrawn by its sponsors.

9. At its 20th meeting, on 30 October, the Committee had before it a revised draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1), submitted by the representative of Colombia in his capacity as Chairperson of the Working Group of the Whole.

10. At the same meeting, the Committee decided to defer action on draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1.

11. At the 25th meeting, on 19 November, the representative of Colombia, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Working Group of the Whole, orally revised draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1 as follows:

(a) In operative paragraph 26, the words "encourages interregional dialogue" were replaced by the words "fosters interregional dialogue";

(b) In operative paragraph 28, the words "set up national space entities to lay the foundation for a regional entity for cooperation" were placed within quotation marks.

12. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.2/Rev.1, as orally revised, without a vote (see para. 13).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

13. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 51/122 of 13 December 1996, 54/68 of 6 December 1999, 59/2 of 20 October 2004, 61/110 and 61/111 of 14 December 2006, 62/101 of 17 December 2007, 62/217 of 22 December 2007 and 63/90 of 5 December 2008,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of mankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space, as the province of all mankind, for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, and of the widest possible adherence to international treaties that promote the peaceful uses of outer space in order to meet emerging new challenges, especially for developing countries,

Seriously concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space, and bearing in mind the importance of article IV of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies[1] (Outer Space Treaty),

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion and strengthening of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Recognizing also that space debris is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and applications as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contributes to international cooperation, and the importance of further developing the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in this field,

Convinced of the importance of the recommendations in the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development", adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), held at Vienna from 19 to 30 July 1999,[2] and

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843.

[2] See *Report of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 19-30 July 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.I.3), chap. I, resolution 1.

the need to promote the use of space technology towards implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[3]

Seriously concerned about the devastating impact of disasters,[4]

Desirous of enhancing international coordination and cooperation at the global level in disaster management and emergency response through greater access to and use of space-based services for all countries and facilitating capacity-building and institutional strengthening for disaster management, in particular in developing countries,

Deeply convinced that the use of space science and technology and their applications in areas such as telemedicine, tele-education, disaster management, environmental protection and other Earth observation applications contribute to achieving the objectives of the global conferences of the United Nations that address various aspects of economic, social and cultural development, particularly poverty eradication,

Taking note, in that regard, of the fact that the 2005 World Summit recognized the important role that science and technology play in promoting sustainable development,[5]

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-second session,[6]

1. *Endorses* the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its fifty-second session;[6]

2. *Agrees* that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, at its fifty-third session, should consider the items recommended by the Committee at its fifty-second session;

3. *Notes* that, at its forty-eighth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued its work,[7] as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/90;

4. *Agrees* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its forty-ninth session, should consider the items recommended by the Committee,[8] taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

5. *Also agrees* that the Legal Subcommittee, at its forty-ninth session, should reconvene its Working Group on the Status and Application of the Five United Nations Treaties on Outer Space, its Working Group on Matters Relating to the Definition and Delimitation of Outer Space and its Working Group on National Legislation Relevant to the Peaceful Exploration and Use of Outer Space;

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[3] See resolution 55/2.

[4] The term "disasters" refers to natural or technological disasters.

[5] See resolution 60/1, para. 60.

[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20).

[7] Ibid., chap. II.D; and A/AC.105/935.

[8] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), paras. 224, 226 and 227.

6. *Urges* States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space[9] to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties in accordance with their domestic law, as well as incorporating them in their national legislation;

7. *Notes* that, at its forty-sixth session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space continued its work,[10] as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/90;

8. *Agrees* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its forty-seventh session, should consider the items recommended by the Committee,[11] taking into account the concerns of all countries, in particular those of developing countries;

9. *Also agrees* that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its forty-seventh session, should reconvene its Working Group of the Whole, its Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space and its Working Group on Near-Earth Objects;

10. *Welcomes* the fact that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its forty-seventh session, will begin consideration under a multi-year workplan of two new items, entitled "International Space Weather Initiative"[12] and "Long-term sustainability of outer space activities",[13] as agreed by the Committee;

11. *Welcomes with satisfaction* the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space, adopted by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its forty-sixth session and endorsed by the Committee at its fifty-second session;[14]

12. *Notes* that the International Atomic Energy Agency Commission on Safety Standards agreed on the Safety Framework at its twenty-fifth meeting, which was held in Vienna from 22 to 24 April 2009, and welcomes the constructive and efficient cooperation between the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the International Atomic Energy Agency in the preparation of the Safety Framework, which is an example of successful inter-agency cooperation within the United Nations system;

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[9] Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 610, No. 8843); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 672, No. 9574); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 961, No. 13810); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1023, No. 15020); and Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1363, No. 23002).

[10] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), chap. II.C; and A/AC.105/933.

[11] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), paras. 163 and 164.

[12] Ibid., paras. 155 and 164; and A/AC.105/933, annex I, para. 16.

[13] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), paras. 161 and 164.

[14] Ibid., para. 138; and A/AC.105/934.

13. *Notes with appreciation* that some States are already implementing space debris mitigation measures on a voluntary basis, through national mechanisms and consistent with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee and with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,[15] endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/217;

14. *Invites* other States to implement, through relevant national mechanisms, the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;[15]

15. *Considers* that it is essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including those with nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, and agrees that international cooperation is needed to expand appropriate and affordable strategies to minimize the impact of space debris on future space missions;

16. *Urges* all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes;

17. *Notes with appreciation* that the activities planned by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 2010 would address, inter alia, water resources management, socio-economic benefits of space activities, small satellite technology for sustainable development, space weather, global navigation satellite systems, search and rescue and space law;[16]

18. *Welcomes* the progress made by the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems towards achieving compatibility and interoperability among global and regional space-based positioning, navigation and timing systems and in the promotion of the use of global navigation satellite systems and their integration into national infrastructure, particularly in developing countries, and notes with satisfaction that the International Committee held its third meeting in Pasadena, United States of America, from 8 to 12 December 2008 and its fourth meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, from 14 to 18 September 2009, and that its fifth meeting will be jointly organized by Italy and the European Commission in 2010;

19. *Endorses* the recommendation of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat should continue to serve as the executive secretariat of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems and its Providers' Forum;[17]

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[15] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/62/20), paras. 117 and 118, and annex.

[16] Ibid., *Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), para. 82.

[17] Ibid., para. 133.

20. *Notes with satisfaction* the progress made within the framework of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) in the implementation of the platform programme for the period 2007-2009;

21. *Endorses* the workplan of the UN-SPIDER programme for the biennium 2010-2011,[18] and encourages Member States to provide all support necessary, on a voluntary basis, to UN-SPIDER, including financial support, to enable it to carry out the workplan;

22. *Welcomes* the fact that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/110, regional support offices were established in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria and Romania, and that a cooperation agreement was reached with the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, to support the implementation of the activities of the UN-SPIDER programme;[19]

23. *Notes with appreciation* that the African regional centres for space science and technology education in the French and English languages, located in Morocco and Nigeria, respectively, as well as the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, affiliated to the United Nations, have continued their education programmes in 2009;

24. *Welcomes* the fact that the regional centres would serve as International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems information centres;[20]

25. *Agrees* that the regional centres should continue to report to the Committee on their activities on an annual basis;

26. *Emphasizes* that regional and interregional cooperation in the field of space activities is essential to strengthen the peaceful uses of outer space, assist States in the development of their space capabilities and contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[3] and to that end fosters interregional dialogue on space matters between Member States;

27. *Recognizes*, in this regard, the important role played by conferences and other mechanisms in strengthening regional and international cooperation among States, such as the Third African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, to be held in Algiers from 7 to 9 December 2009; the sixteenth session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum, to be held in Bangkok from 26 to 29 January 2010 in cooperation with the Sentinel Asia project; the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization, with headquarters in Beijing, which started operating formally in December 2008; and the International Air and Space Fair, to be held in Santiago from 23 to 28 March 2010;

28. *Notes with appreciation* that since the adoption of the Declaration of San Francisco de Quito by the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas in July 2006, more States in the Latin America and Caribbean region have set up national space entities of a civilian nature, thus laying the foundation for enhanced regional

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[18] A/AC.105/937, annex.

[19] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), para. 122.

[20] Ibid., para. 132.

cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and recalls that in the Declaration, States in the Latin America and Caribbean region were invited to, inter alia, "set up national space entities to lay the foundation for a regional entity for cooperation";

29. *Welcomes*, in that regard, the fact that the Government of Mexico will host the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas from 22 to 27 November 2010 and that the preparatory meeting for the Conference will be held in Santiago in June 2010;

30. *Emphasizes* the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to sustained economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including mitigation of the consequences of disasters, in particular in the developing countries;

31. *Notes* that space science and technology and their applications could make important contributions to economic, social and cultural development and welfare, as indicated in the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development",[2] its resolution 59/2 and the Plan of Action of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III;[21]

32. *Notes with appreciation* that a number of the recommendations set out in the Plan of Action have been implemented and that satisfactory progress is being made in implementing the outstanding recommendations;

33. *Urges* all Member States to continue to contribute to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications to enhance the capacity of the Office for Outer Space Affairs to provide technical and legal advisory services in accordance with the Plan of Action, while maintaining the priority thematic areas agreed by the Committee;

34. *Reiterates* that the benefits of space technology and its applications should continue to be brought to the attention, in particular, of the major United Nations conferences and summits for economic, social and cultural development and related fields and that the use of space technology should be promoted towards achieving the objectives of those conferences and summits and for implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration;

35. *Notes with appreciation* that the initiative of the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to seek a holistic approach for enhancing coordination between Member States and the United Nations system in applying space science and technology to meet the challenges to development of all countries and to further promote and strengthen the use of space technology and its applications in the United Nations system would be further developed for the consideration of the Committee at its fifty-third session;[22]

36. *Welcomes* the increased efforts to strengthen further the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities as the central United Nations mechanism for building partnerships and coordinating space-related activities within the framework of the ongoing reforms in the United Nations system to work in unison and deliver

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[21] See A/59/174, sect. VI.B.

[22] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), paras. 15 and 290.

as one, and encourages entities of the United Nations system to participate fully in the work of the Inter-Agency Meeting;

37. *Urges* entities of the United Nations system, particularly those participating in the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, to continue to examine, in cooperation with the Committee, how space science and technology and their applications could contribute to implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration on the development agenda, particularly in the areas relating to, inter alia, food security and increasing opportunities for education;

38. *Invites* the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities to continue to contribute to the work of the Committee and to report to the Committee on the work conducted at its annual sessions;

39. *Notes with satisfaction* that the open informal meetings, held in conjunction with the annual sessions of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities and in which representatives of member States and observers in the Committee participate, provide a constructive mechanism for an active dialogue between the entities of the United Nations system and member States and observers in the Committee;

40. *Welcomes* the contribution of the Committee to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development,[23] and agrees that the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the Secretariat should continue to participate in the sessions of the Commission to raise awareness and promote the benefits of space science and technology for sustainable development, and that the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat should continue to be invited to participate in the sessions of the Committee to inform it how it could further contribute to the work of the Commission;

41. *Requests* the United Nations University and other scientific institutions and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to explore the possibilities of providing training and policy research at the crossroads of international law, climate change and outer space;

42. *Requests* the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, and agrees that during its consideration of the matter the Committee could continue to consider ways to promote regional and interregional cooperation based on experiences stemming from the Space Conferences of the Americas, the African Leadership Conferences on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development and the role space technology could play in the implementation of recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development;

43. *Endorses* the composition of the bureaux of the Committee and its subcommittees for the period 2010-2011,[24] and agrees that the Committee and its subcommittees should elect their officers at their respective sessions in 2010 in accordance with that composition;

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[23] See A/AC.105/872, A/AC.105/892 and A/AC.105/944.

[24] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/64/20), para. 309.

44. *Also endorses* the decision of the Committee to grant permanent observer status to the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization;[25]

45. *Notes* that each of the regional groups has the responsibility for actively promoting the participation in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies of the member States of the Committee that are also members of the respective regional groups, and agrees that the regional groups should consider this Committee-related matter among their members;

46. *Requests* entities of the United Nations system and other international organizations to continue and, where appropriate, to enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with reports on the issues dealt with in the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, notes with satisfaction that a panel discussion on space applications and global health was held at United Nations Headquarters on 20 October 2009, and agrees that a panel discussion should be held at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on a topic to be selected by the Committee, taking into account the panel discussions held on climate change, food security and global health.

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[25] Ibid., para. 311.